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Charles Beck to Sarah Sabina Kean, September 4, 1830

Charles Beck

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Highland school. Sept. 4. 30.

Madam,

A longer time has been suffered to elapse between our last communication and the present, than is our custom, not from any diminution of interest in the welfare of your son, but because in most departments his progress was so regular that it did not afford material for a more satisfactory information, than was contained in his weekly certificates, and in one branch, the ^{classical} ~~mathematical~~, a crisis was approaching the arrival of which we wished to await, before we addressed you on a subject which is an important one, as it will materially influence the rest of your son's education.

Although you may not have been familiarly acquainted with the particulars of your son's former instructions in the ancient languages, yet the effect which it produced, a deeply settled disgust of classical studies, cannot have escaped your observation, which effect may have been aided by his natural deficiency in energy and resolution. His own good sense showed him soon the small extent of his classical knowledge, and the large field over which he would have to travel; this very circumstance added discouragement to his disinclination; and my close and careful observation of the state of his mind for several months has led me to the opinion that his resolution is not strong enough to overcome both these obstacles.

A few days ago I had a conversation with him on the subject. I mentioned to him that not want of ability but energy impeded his progress, that his present state of indetermination, if he should not be able to summon sufficient resolution for overcoming his dislike of classical studies and give his whole heart to them, could not but exercise an influence detrimental to manliness and decision in his character. On the other hand I directed his attention to the circumstance of his having himself chosen his present career in compliance with the wish of his nearest friends, and that this consideration, if no other, should enable him to get the better of his dislike; that this one victory in the struggle between duty and inclination would have a lasting salutary effect upon him towards giving stability to his character, while, on the other hand, yielding in this point would only prepare him to be equally weak in others. I advised him to consider for several days the subject in these points of view or in any other in which it might present itself to him, and if after mature consideration he should arrive at a conclusion unfavorable to the continuations of his classical studies, to make a plain statement of the case to you; I would do the same. Since then your son has informed me that he wrote to you the same day on which we had the conversation, I expressed my astonishment at, and disapprobation of the haste with which he proceeded in so important a matter, and requested him to look still upon it as by no means settled.

Thus, I have given you a short statement both of what has taken place and of our view of the case, leaving the decision to you. One remark only allow me to add; we have no occasion to complain of your son's want of application even in this department; he has made as

great exertions as a person can make whose whole heart is not
in his pursuits.

It is not without pain, Madam, that I make this communica-
tion, apprehending it will disappoint a plan long cherished; the only
consolation I have, is the consciousness of having done what was in my
power and of having withheld no information which might enable you
to judge for yourself. I request you to favor me with as early an
answer as your convenience and the importance of the subject will
allow. If there is any point on which you should like to have more
precise information, I shall be happy to furnish it, if it
is within my reach.

With sincere esteem I remain, Madam,

your ob. serv.

Charles Buck.

Dr Beck
Highland School on
acc^t of my dear son.
Sept^r. 1830

Mrs. Sarah J. Hean.



Butternuts.

Orange Co. N.Y.

